



INDIAN RIVER STATE COLLEGE

Institutional Advancement Department

NEWS RELEASE

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Photo Caption:

Clark Advanced Learning Center students gained hands-on experience evaluating Florida's ecosystem through field visits to the DuPuis Management Area in western Martin County.

CLARK ADVANCED LEARNING CENTER STUDENTS PROTECT ENDANGERED ECOSYSTEMS

Armed with cameras, measuring sticks, and sunscreen, twelve high school students from the Clark Advanced Learning Center gained hands-on experience evaluating Florida's ecosystem through field visits to the DuPuis Management Area in western Martin County. Students from the public charter high school on the Chastain Campus of Indian River State College, mapped the area, monitored growth of native vegetation, and documented plant diversity.

Squatting in a patch of saw palmetto, Clark junior Shailah Steck found Caesar weed, chalky bluestem, and rusty lyonia, and left the patch with an important lesson, "There is actually more to what you see; you just have to get down and experience what's going on around you."

The students learned about the ecosystem with the assistance of staff from the South Florida Water Management District through the Legacy Project and Florida Center for Environmental Studies, which is run by Florida Atlantic University. It was their second visit to the 22,000 acre site as part of a dual enrollment class with Indian River State College, enabling the students to earn high school and college credits simultaneously. As part of the course, the students survey a section of the pine flatwoods ecosystem before the district shreds the growth and razes it in a controlled burn. The goal is to covert the property to its natural state by controlling vegetation growth and encouraging species diversity. The students will return twice after the burn to document how the land regenerates.

"Through this experience our students understand the connections between science and nature," said Susan Roark, Assistant Director of the Clark Advanced Learning Center. "This is a unique opportunity for high school students to conduct real research which will be utilized by the South Florida Water Management District."

The Clark Advanced Learning Center, a national model public charter high school, serves about 220 high school sophomores, juniors and seniors with enriched learning opportunities, including internships, and personal attention in a small school setting. Clark students are able to earn college credits at no charge while still in high school through dual enrollment and each student is assigned a laptop computer to assist with research. The Clark Advanced Learning Center is located at the Indian River State College Chastain Campus in Stuart, FL. For more information, contact the Clark Advanced Learning Center at (772) 419-5750 or visit www.clarkadvancedlearningcenter.org.

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